



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

way could become acquainted with the activities of the Society. It seems quite evident that the wider contact thus provided will furnish a direct and helpful stimulus toward enhancing art in Minnesota, both from the standpoint of the producer and consumer. Surely such efforts as these make for the "democratization of art."

Altogether, this first exhibition under the joint auspices of the State Fair management and the State Art Society was very encouraging. Mr. Flagg and Mr. J. C. Simpson, Secretary of the State Fair, who were active in the inauguration of the scheme, consider that it was a wholly gratifying experiment. They felt certain that succeeding exhibitions will have greater value. The governing board of the State Art Society are in hearty accord with the project. The four Chicago artists, Miss Bessie Bennett, Mr. Albert Fleury, Mr. Leonard Crunelle and Mr. H. Leon Roecker, who served as a jury of selection and award, were much impressed both with the quality of the work submitted by Minnesota artists and the practicality of the new plan for exhibiting it.

Just a word in conclusion relating to the art objects shown. To achieve an exhibition up to the standard of those held the last two or three years was difficult this time owing to the State Art Society's exhibition last March. The matter of having Minnesota artists submit new work so soon thereafter, and during the summer season, was not a favorable circumstance. The decision to change the time and place of the Annual Exhibition was arrived at quite suddenly, and the time left to bring the plans to fulfilment was short. Nevertheless, through his enthusiasm and efficiency, Mr. Flagg succeeded in obtaining a very gratifying response from the artists of the State. This made it possible for the jury to select work which was quite on a par with, if not in some respects superior to, that which has been seen in the best of previous exhibitions. As before, cash prizes, this time amounting to \$625, were offered and awarded by the jury. In addition to the work of Minnesota artists, a representative collection of some twenty-six canvases by leading American artists was shown through arrangement with the American Federation of Arts.

## ART IN TRADES\*

BY WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN

THERE are some persons who think that painting and sculpture are all there is in art worth considering. If that were so I might as well stop right here, because the less statues there are on furniture and the less pictures there are on carpets and hangings the better.

I am going to just tell you very simply something of my own experience, and some of the conclusions that I think can be fairly deduced therefrom. When I graduated from Yale University I started work as a carpet salesman. Customers

used to come in and describe the style of their room, the color of the woodwork, the hangings and the furniture, and then they would ask the salesman's recommendation regarding the color and design of the carpet. I was a perfect ignoramus. I would make some excuse, go around the corner and ask the advice of one of the older salesmen. Afterwards I would ask his reason for his recommendations. Their suggestions were usually excellent but they had no studied reasons. I made up my mind that there

\*An address made at the Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Chicago, May 23, 1914.

must be some fundamental reasons underlying this choice, and that self-respect demanded that I should learn them. I happened by good fortune at that time to be a member of the Committee of Management of the West Side Y. M. C. A. of New York City, and I went to the Chairman of the Educational Committee, told him my problem and guaranteed the class if he would provide the instructor. So in the fall of 1902 Mr. Frank Alvah Parsons began his class in house furnishing and decorating.

I recall going around to see Mr. Robert Ogden, who at that time was the head of Wanamaker's in New York. I asked him to preside at our opening meeting. He said: "Young man, I don't want to discourage you, but I started just such a course at Wanamaker's and nobody came after the first meeting." "How much did you charge them?" I asked, and he replied: "I did not charge them anything." I said, "That is where we win. We charge them twenty dollars for twenty lectures and if they pay it they won't miss any of the twenty." Thirty-five men paid twenty dollars and thirty-five men were there, and if they had to miss one lecture on account of sickness or some urgent cause, they made Mr. Parsons make it up at some opportune time. That has been the spirit of the class all the time.

I remember Mr. Parsons once calling attention to the unusual thickness of a part of the frame of a Heppelwhite chair. At once one of the class got up in the back of the room with a rule in his hand, measured the frame and said: "Why, I never made one a millimeter smaller than that, Mr. Parsons." That is the kind of men the instructor was up against. If he made a mistake he was thoroughly jumped on and thoroughly educated, and in that way the course went on until in the ten or twelve years it has been running it has been attended by over 700 men. Mr. Parsons can get any sample of any fabric that is made in New York City that he wants to hang on the walls and use as an illustration, and every principle that he lays down has to be so illustrated. This has brought about the

coöperation of the stores; the petty jealousies of rival salesmen have disappeared, and, instead, a fellowship grew up so strong that before the class had gone on more than two years The Art in Trades Club was formed out of the graduates. This has increased and perpetuated in a delightful way the influence of the courses.

The first course is on the general Theory of Color, followed by a study of Line Harmony. Of course you will at once say, "Why don't you study form and line first and color afterwards?" The answer is simple—because men think they need to know about color, and you might just as well teach them what they think they ought to know first, and incidentally show them what else they ought to know.

These courses are exceedingly practical. I remember very well the night we studied the Greek division of spaces. The next day I started out with our rug expert and measured the spacing of the designs in a large number of oriental rugs. We soon discovered that when the design was not pleasing to the eye the reason was that the medallion was one-half or a third of the size of the field and the bands were arranged mechanically. In the best pieces, however, there was always that subtle proportion which gives the charm. Perhaps it was due to inaccuracy of weaving or faulty dyeing; more probably it was due to the instinctive art knowledge of the oriental, which it is so hard for the mechanical age that we live in to grasp; but it meant the difference between a good and a poor design.

Then I recall that we used to make rugs with a plain center and band borders; three bands, each stepped darker than the one within. Generally one or two of these bands were off hue. One day I was reading that delightful psychology of Professor James (I use the word "delightful" advisedly), and found the place where it states that the human eye can only detect seven steps between the lightest and darkest in colors, and it at once flashed into my mind that the ground color was usually number four or

five, and it was therefore a physical impossibility to make a three-band border without having the outside band black or one of the bands off hue. Since then we have made only one or two band borders and we hit the color pretty nearly right. If anyone asks for a three-band border they are given this psychological explanation and that settles it.

A knowledge of the psychology of color is absolutely essential to the intelligent buyer at the present day. You may never have figured this out, but I happened to be the buyer of the department for many years, and I remember very well that in the years when people were making fortunes rapidly, at least on paper, there was a great demand for the rich reds. Then came the bank failures in the fall of 1907, and the popular favor at once turned to the browns of service and the quiet blues. That is an actual fact which I can prove from the stock books. At the same time the French *salon* was replaced by the English living-room. Now it happens, as you all know, that the best furniture makers in England lived contemporaneously with the opening of intercourse with China, and no nation has excelled the Chinese in the use of the blues and browns in decorative fabrics, so that the present Chinese craze is based on absolutely logical grounds. I might incidentally remark that there is practically no call today for the rich reds, except for the "movie" theatres.

I hesitate very much to speak of "Historic Styles" and "Period Furniture," because these terms are so constantly used to condone atrocities and to deceive the credulous. It seems to be generally thought that any architect or interior decorator is entirely justified in copying any famous room of the past and making his client live in it whether he feels at home or not. In our teaching in these courses we have always insisted that the only use that you are justified in making of the past is to ascertain how certain effects can be produced which are harmonious with certain types of character, and that home building is the creation of appropriate environments for certain specific individual lives. You have got to

act out the character that you are trying to express. Now, there are many people on the stage today whose personality is the same no matter what the play is. They may be great elocutionists, but they are poor actors. The actor or the interior decorator is the greatest artist when the audience loses his own personality and sees only the superb portrayal of the character that he has temporarily assumed. That is the function of the interior decorator and the architect—to act out the character that they are trying to express.

This subject of art in trades is a very old one. When they built the home for the Royal Society of Artists in England they inscribed these words over the entrance: "Art and Commerce Promoted." But those artists were not broad minded enough to see any art except in pictures and in statues. They have had wonderful exhibitions of painting and sculpture, but commerce has not been affected. A similar alliance of art and industry was attempted on a larger scale in the South Kensington Museum. I happened to ask an official there one day if they ever had any courses for salesmen. The reply was, "Oh, dear, no, over here no one would think of asking advice of a tradesman." They delighted to charitably instruct the very poor, they catered to the cultured rich, but they cared naught for the vast class of salespeople. I presume their idea of an art museum was similar to one I recently heard expressed—that the function of a museum was to conserve the art of the past and not to promote the art of the future.

There are three ways in which you can promote art in commerce. You can educate the taste of the general public, you can introduce a lot of art students into the industries, or you can teach the leaders of those industries, the people already engaged in the trades. There has been a tremendous advance in teaching the boys and girls in our schools, even in our kindergartens, the correct principles of color and form, and I doubt if we can overestimate the great power that this is going to have in uplifting the general taste of the public in the

future. But you will pardon me if I protest most strongly against the half-digested knowledge which is so commonly taught as the principles of domestic science. To illustrate my meaning: Our firm received a request from a large school of excellent standing for an opportunity to obtain data for a course in domestic science. I made the appointment myself, and at the time fixed a young lady appeared with a notebook and a lot of questions. I did my best to answer each one of these with the constant warning that my answer was to that specific question and was not a principle of general application. After about half an hour of this I learned to my horror that she was only getting information from which another was to work out a lecture, which was to be given to still others, who in turn were to pass on this information again to other classes. When I thought of the ultimate consumers of this thrice perverted information I could only echo the words of Josh Billings: "It ain't my ignorance that worries me as much as knowing so many things that ain't so." That is not an exceptional incident.

There is a great movement at the present time to force into the trades an ever increasing class of art students, both male and female. Now, the trades do need the coöperation of artists. We need it badly; we welcome it gladly, particularly if the artists have some real merit and some common sense. But the trouble is that the ones who come to us are mostly the unpromising painters and sculptors with no business training, and I confess that I am too much of a pessimist to expect very much regeneration of commerce by artistic discards.

The hopeful way to me of allying art to commerce is by the artistic education of those who are already engaged in trades, the present or future leaders of industry; and the ambitious men in the trades are eager to spend time and money in obtaining such education. Only a few weeks ago at the invitation of a very large department store in Toronto, Mr. Parsons (the instructor of our courses at the West Side Y. M. C. A.) lectured,

first, to the employees of this store, and later to various clubs, and even at the University of Toronto, on the subject of art in house decorating and furnishing, and in costuming and advertising. I don't know what other branches he spoke on. And the meetings were crowded. The interest of Texas in art matters has been lately remarked. Mr. Parsons was sent for, two years in succession, to give lectures in Texas for a week at a time on these subjects.

It is reported that people are not interested in art as art. I confess I agree with the people. I am not interested in art as art. But when you get art as applied to things we use in everyday life, then everybody in this country is interested, and there are tremendous possibilities in just such education. I think you can give it probably more readily through the Y. M. C. A., because they have a more flexible system of education and are in closer touch with the people I am referring to. But I care not where it is given so long as it is given. I don't know whether you realize it or not, but the salesmen in our stores have more power in influencing the public taste than all the art teachers in this country, and if you give this vocational training to them you give every man and woman in the trades a new vision of life. With such a training the printer will think out how he can space properly the common advertisement; the girl behind the counter will think out how she can sell material to a customer that will make the customer not attracting because bizarre, but attractive because beautiful. And everybody who has to do with the furnishing of a home will realize that they are creating an environment, and will study out how they can so make it that it will force out the best traits in the character of the men and women who are to reflect that environment. In short, what we are driving at is simply this: that every man and woman in the trades in this country shall have a working knowledge of the fundamental principles which underlie their daily tasks, so that they can intelligently and joyfully think out their job as it should be in a world of things as they are.